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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

WEDNESDAY, April 20, 1938.
(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "ARBOR DAY NEWS." Information from the Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Among the week's letters happen to be quite a number from listeners asking about Arbor Day. Several want to know the official date of this tree-planting day. One asks who started the day. And another inquires about celebrations in different parts of the country.

You'll be interested to know that 66 years ago this very month the people of Nebraska celebrated the first Arbor Day. To be exact, the date was April 10, 1872, and on that date more than a million trees were planted in Nebraska. But the official date of Arbor Day differs in the various States, because the best time for tree-planting differs with the climate. In the South generally the date is early in the year. Georgia observes it on the first Friday in December and Florida on the first Friday in February. Texas celebrates it right along with Washington's birthday on February 22. Farther north the date is later. Maine and Wisconsin, for example, celebrate their tree days as late as May. Some States have 2 Arbor Days each year, one in the spring and one in the fall. But April is the month when the largest number of States observe Arbor Day.

More than two-thirds of our 48 States have Arbor Day laws. The other States and the Territories like Hawaii observe it by proclamation of the Governor or some other official. Arbor Day is a legal holiday in 6 States -- Arizona, Nebraska, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah and Wyoming. And in Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico it is a holiday in all public schools.

How did it all start? It grew from the need of the Americans living on the Great Plains of the West -- that wide land with scarcely a tree yet with a soil and climate well able to nourish trees.

Perhaps you remember that a Nebraskan by the name of J. Sterling Morton was the father of Arbor Day. In 1872 he proposed the plan of a Statewide tree-planting day and the name Arbor Day in a resolution. When that resolution passed in Nebraska it began a celebration that has since spread around the world. Arbor Day is now a school festival not only in all parts of this country but also in Great Britain, France, Norway, Russia, Spain, Japan and China.

Of course, tree-planting was not a new idea to the Nebraskans when they celebrated their first Arbor Day. The early settlers in that country had suffered from a lack of trees and had begun to plant them along with their first crops. They needed trees for fence posts as well as for windbreaks to protect their crops, orchards and homes against the great winds that sweep across the Plains region. But before 1872 tree planting had been a hit-and-miss affair. Afterward the people of Nebraska received information about the trees that would thrive best in their climate and about how to plant and care for them. In 1902 a Federal Forest

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Service nursery was started in Nebraska to supply the planters with young trees. So from being practically a treeless State, Nebraska has become one of the leaders in practical forestry.

You can read more about the history of Arbor Day in a Department of Agriculture bulletin. This bulletin is called "Arbor Day, Its Purpose and Observance." It is Farmers' Bulletin No. 1492. And as long as the free supply lasts, you are welcome to a copy. Just send a postcard to the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C. asking for it. Once again, the name of the bulletin is: "Arbor Day, Its Purpose and Observance." The number is 1492. And you get it by writing to the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C.

As for how Arbor Day is being observed, that bulletin will give you plenty of answers. It tells about planting memorial trees and of the many famous memorial trees now growing in different parts of the country. It tells about planting trees to beautify streets, highways, parks, school grounds and community centers, as many towns are doing. It also tells about observing Arbor Day as many rural families are observing it -- by planting small forest trees on unused or badly washing land to save the land and bring it back to production.

But the most important Arbor Day tree, the tree that means the most to the Nation, the State and the community, is the tree of the forest. In spite of all the acres that foresters, C.C.C. boys, and other groups have planted to young trees in recent years, this country has still great areas of devastated and denuded forest lands that must be reforested to be saved. Our forest needs are still far greater than our supply. So probably the most patriotic celebration of Arbor Day this year might be establishing a community forest -- woodland owned by your community, or town, or even by the school in your community. A great many such forests have already been established and many have already proved paying investments as well as matters of civic pride, recreation, health and education. Maybe that sounds like a good deal of credit to give to a patch of wooded land. But, you see, a community forest is a school of the woods for its owners -- the citizens of the community. And it may help protect reservoirs and watersheds; it may be a game preserve or bird sanctuary; and it may include public playgrounds, parks, or tourist camps as well as yield fuel, timber and other forest products.

Now if you want information on tree-planting, you are welcome not only to the Arbor Day bulletin which I mentioned but others published by the Department of Agriculture. The Department has bulletins on the trees to plant on city streets and how to care for them, on trees for roadside planting, on the care and improvement of farm woods, and on the different trees for different regions of the country. And the Forest Service is always ready to answer tree-planting questions.
